United Nations A/AC.109/2006/13

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 April 2006

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Montserrat

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	General	1–4	3
II.	Volcanic activity	5–8	3
III.	Constitutional, legal and political issues	9–18	4
IV.	Economic conditions	19–33	6
	A. General	19–22	6
	B. Agriculture	23	7
	C. Banking and finance	24–25	7
	D. Tourism	26–28	7
	E. Construction and infrastructure	29–33	8
V.	Social conditions	34–45	9
	A. General	34	9
	B. Education	35–38	9
	C. Health	39–41	10
	D. Human rights	42–43	10
	E. Crime	44–45	10
VI.	United Kingdom development assistance	46–47	11
VII.	Relations with international organizations and entities	48–51	11

06-29673 (E) 200406

VIII. Future status of the Territory 52-57 12
A. Position of the territorial Government 52-53 12
B. Position of the administering Power 54-57 12
IX. Consideration by the General Assembly 58 13

I. General

1. Montserrat[1] was named after a Spanish monastery by Christopher Columbus on his second trip to the island in 1493. In 1632, the island became a British colony, and its first settlers came mainly from Ireland. Slaves, who worked the cotton, sugar and tobacco plantations, were unsuccessful in an uprising in 1768. Although Montserrat was occupied by France for brief periods, it returned definitively to British rule in 1783. Montserrat became a British Crown Colony in 1871. Following the break-up of the Federation of the West Indies in 1962, Montserrat opted to retain its status as a crown colony instead of electing associated statehood.[2]

2. Montserrat is situated in the Leeward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, 43 kilometres south-west of Antigua and 64 kilometres north-west of the French Overseas Department of Guadeloupe.

3. The island covers an area of 103 square kilometres, all of which is volcanic and mountainous. Its coastline is rugged and there is no all-weather harbour. There are three mountain ranges: Silver Hills in the north, Center Hills and the Soufrière Hills in the south. There are hot springs, ravines, black sand beaches and a white sand beach at Rendezvous Bay in the north. The island is tropical, usually tempered by sea breezes. The vegetation prior to the volcanic activity in 1995 and 1997 was tropical; mountainous areas close to the volcano were thickly forested, with fruit and vegetables grown on the cultivated areas, but successive eruptions and pyroclastic flows reduced these areas to a scarred, lunar-type landscape. It will be many years before they can be cultivated again.[3]

4. The population of the island, which reached its peak of 14,333 in 1946, fell after the volcanic eruption of 1995 and had fallen to an all-time low of 4,493 by the time of the May 2001 census. Figures for 2004 showed a slight increase of 207 (a growth of 4.65 per cent), and by mid-2005 the population was estimated at 4,785. The Government is committed to population growth by promoting migrant workers to settle on the island and by encouraging Montserratians to return home.

II. Volcanic activity

5. In July 1995, the Soufrière Hills Volcano, dormant for more than 400 years, erupted with devastating effects and caused the evacuation of the population from the southern part of the island to its northern "safe" areas. Montserrat's capital, Plymouth, was abandoned after the increase in volcanic activity on 3 April 1996. The temporary capital is now located in Brades and a new capital is being planned in Little Bay, situated on the north-east coast of the island. According to information provided by the administering Power, the Government of Montserrat, beginning in April 1996, had to move 70 per cent of the population away from the volcanic centres of the south into the safer north. In October 1996, the island was divided into a series of zones based on the scientists' evaluation of the degree of risk to occupants of the different areas. Over time, the zones were modified to create an exclusion zone, which covers the southern two thirds of the island and remains off limits to the general public.

6. The Montserrat Volcano Observatory was established after the eruption of the Montsoufrière Volcano in 1995 and became a statutory body of the Government of Montserrat in 1999. Funded mainly through the Department for International

Development (DFID) of the Government of the United Kingdom, its role is to advise civilian authorities on the volcanic activity and associated hazards.

7. In the two years between the volcanic eruptions (1995 and 1997), roughly two thirds of the population of Montserrat left the island. Most went to other Caribbean islands or to the United Kingdom, with fewer than 300 going to the United States of America to live with relatives in New York and Boston. The United States granted the Montserratians temporary protected status, renewed yearly. In June 2004, the Department of Homeland Security ordered the end of Montserratians' temporary protected status effective 27 February 2005. About a third of the Montserratians in the United States managed to gain legal status in other ways and a few chose to go to the United Kingdom.[4]

8. Volcanic activity continued on Montserrat throughout 2005. According to an official report of October 2005, there was significant activity beginning in April 2005 when "vigorous gas and ash release" continued for two weeks. In June and July 2005, there was a series of explosions, preceded and followed by earthquakes contained within the dome of the volcano. These earthquakes produced columns of ash rising up to 10 kilometres above sea level. Some of the ash was blown over the western side of the island. The report estimated that the probability of continued eruptions of the Soufrière Hills Volcano for another five years was about 77 per cent, and for another 20 years about 43 per cent.[5]

III. Constitutional, legal and political issues

9. Montserrat is a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The basis of the relationship between the Government of the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories, including Montserrat, is set out in the White Paper entitled "Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories" (see A/AC.109/1999/1 and Corr.1, annex; for key recommendations, see A/AC.109/1999/9, para. 28). The British Overseas Territories Act 2002 (see A/AC.109/2002/2/Add.1) abolished the terms "colony" and "dependent territory" and granted the right of British citizenship to citizens of its Territories.

10. According to the administering Power, Montserrat is an internally self-governing Overseas Territory, a status which provides for the execution of Government through a Governor appointed by the Crown, an Executive Council that has the general control and direction of Government and a Legislative Council. The Governor retains responsibility for internal security (including police), external affairs, defence, public service (of which the Governor is the head) and offshore finance.

11. The law of Montserrat is English common law and locally enacted legislation. It is administered by a Magistrates Court and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. Cases handled by the Supreme Court have recourse of final appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

12. The current Governor of Montserrat, Deborah Barnes-Jones, who took office in May 2004, is the first female Governor of a British Territory. According to the administering Power, elections were held in 2001 using a single constituency electoral system. The electoral arrangements had to be modified since most of the

previous seven constituencies were located in the exclusion zone. The main political parties are the New People's Liberation Movement and the National Progressive Party. In the 2001 election, the New People's Liberation Movement secured seven of the nine seats available in the Legislative Council. The National Progressive Party won the other two seats. No independent candidates were successful. There was a record turn out of 78 per cent, with 2,293 ballots cast from a total of 2,953 registered voters. The next general election is constitutionally due in June 2006.

13. According to information provided by the administering Power, the Montserrat Constitution Order, which came into force in 1990, includes: (a) a section on the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual ("Bill of Rights"), including a provision stating Montserrat's right to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations; (b) a provision for the delegation of some, or all, of the Governor's responsibilities (except for appointments to public office) to locally elected Ministers, subject to the prior approval of the Secretary of State; and (c) the transfer of responsibility for international financial services from Montserratian Ministers to the Governor.

14. According to the administering Power, the 1999 White Paper recognized that the constitutions of the Territories needed to be kept up to date and, where necessary, modernized, and that suggestions from Overseas Territories Governments for specific proposals for constitutional change would be considered carefully. As was reported in last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 9), a Constitutional Review Committee was set up in 2002 under the chairmanship of Sir Howard Fergus. In February 2003, the Governor was presented with the Committee's report, including recommendations for a number of changes to the existing constitution. The report suggested that the Chief Minister of the Territory be invited to examine short-listed candidates for the position of Governor and make a reasoned recommendation, thus participating in the selection process. The report recorded a minority view that the Chief Minister could not do that effectively since he did not know the candidates. The report nevertheless concluded that the proposed change from the imposition of the candidate by the United Kingdom to cooperative action in choosing a Governor would have symbolic significance. In addition, the report registered the opinion that a candidate for Governor should have stipulated qualities and capabilities, namely that such a person should have some understanding of Caribbean and Montserrat culture, as well as some skills in the area of development planning.

15. The Constitutional Review Committee conducted widespread public consultations, including some in the United Kingdom. The first round of talks took place in Montserrat in September 2005 with a team from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.[6]

16. Delivering the budget speech in March 2006, the Chief Minister noted that in negotiating a new constitution with the United Kingdom, it was the Government's intention to make improvements that would: preserve the ability of Montserrat to move towards greater self-determination when the circumstances permit; define more clearly the responsibilities and relationships among the institutions and parties named in the constitution; and take into account international norms and practices as they relate to Montserrat. The Chief Minister added that an initial draft of the new constitution had been submitted to the United Kingdom for consideration and

discussion. It was the Government's intention to issue a final draft for public discussion once it was ready.

17. The 2003 report of the Constitutional Review Committee also stated that the dependent status of Montserrat should not prevent it from benefiting from certain international arrangements and conventions, since the Territory was part of the global community. Montserrat's current relations with international organizations and entities are detailed in paragraphs 48 to 50 below.

18. The status of the Territory was also discussed by an expert from Montserrat, Sir Howard Fergus, Chairman of the 2002 Constitutional Review Committee, who attended the Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from 17 to 19 May 2005 (A/60/23, chap. II, annex, para. 31 (c)). Sir Howard Fergus said that political progress was defined as a reduction of the autonomy deficit inherent in the colonial relationship. To achieve this, the "reserved powers" of Governors had to be negotiable. The United Kingdom Foreign Office, however, was strongly opposed to this while all the Caribbean Chief Ministers were unanimous in their desire for minimal powers for the Governors. The growing frustration caused by this situation could catalyse and accelerate the movement towards full self-government. Meanwhile, the perceived nexus between the affluence of the Territories and their constitutional status persisted. More political education was needed to break the psychology and culture of dependence. The expert added that Montserrat was the only Territory to have called for a dialogue on free association. It might not be realized, but the people, nevertheless, had the right to propose it.

IV. Economic conditions

A. General

19. Volcanic activity and hurricane damage have combined to seriously undermine Montserrat's economic development and have implications for its future planning. As efforts to rebuild the economy continue, economic activity centres on reconstruction, which is largely funded through the Department for International Development (DFID) (see para. 45).

20. As was reported in last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 25), the analytical study conducted by the University of the West Indies, entitled "The challenges of achieving development in a micro state: the case of Montserrat 1995-2001", had concluded that Montserrat's economy had continued to experience a debilitating shock to its development since 1995. The study identified as major challenges: limited financial resources; external decision-making; population size; limited development prospects; lack of natural resources; and lack of key infrastructure.

21. According to the information provided in the 2006 budget speech, real economic growth was only 1 per cent in 2005. The economic outlook for 2006, however, is encouraging as growth in gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to increase by 5 per cent. The total revenue required to fund the 2006 budget is 83,213,400 East Caribbean dollars (EC$), of which EC$ 47,900,000 will be financed

by the United Kingdom through budgetary support. The Government has stated throughout the past five years that private sector development is critical to Montserrat's sustainable development. The Government has therefore provided incentives and has promoted Montserrat internationally for tourism and investments.

22. According to the administering Power, the economy supports close to 200 business establishments, both large and small, in its private sector, employing almost 600 workers. Provision of financial, professional, personal and other household services occupy first place in Montserrat's economy. Wholesale and retail trades and food preparation occupy second and third place respectively.

B. Agriculture

23. As a result of the volcanic crisis, the majority of fertile agricultural lands, pasture and fishing areas are either restricted or not accessible. According to information provided by the administering Power, agriculture did not contribute more than 1.23 per cent to GDP in 2005, due to a major ash fall, which caused a drop in production of 42.1 per cent during the first six months of the year. Production in the chicken farming sector also declined by 3 per cent in 2005 due to the departure of a large company. Government efforts to achieve food security include: incentives to farmers to increase the acreage of lands under production; establishing a food processing laboratory to improve the shelf-life of products; encouraging backyard gardening; and the construction of a public market.

C. Banking and finance

24. As was reported in last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 28), Montserrat has a small offshore financial centre. In March 2002, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) announced that it had removed Montserrat from its list of uncooperative tax jurisdictions, as the Territory had made a commitment to transparency and effective exchange of information on tax matters with OECD countries by the end of 2005.

25. According to officials of the United States Department of State, in their 2005 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Territories administered by the United Kingdom remain vulnerable to money-laundering because of their significant offshore sector and tax-free jurisdictions. Montserrat was denoted as vulnerable to money-laundering because of a lack of regulatory resources and exchange controls for transactions less than $250,000. The report recommended that the Government of Montserrat criminalize self-laundering related to domestic drug trafficking and ensure adequate oversight and supervision of its offshore sector to deter criminal and terrorist organizations from abusing its financial services sector.

D. Tourism

26. According to the administering Power, despite unfavourable conditions created by the eruption of the Soufrière Hills Volcano and subsequent destruction of infrastructure and accommodations, there is general recognition that tourism is the sector that could provide long-term economic regeneration for Montserrat. In 2005,

the Government of Montserrat allocated EC$ 7 million over a three-year period to fund tourism-related projects. During the reporting period, the Government continued efforts to keep the industry alive and developed plans for its reconstruction and expansion.

27. The Government of Montserrat has embarked on a tourism-awareness programme to educate the public about tourism and its significance to the economy of the island and its people. It has also launched a media project designed to promote a positive image of Montserrat. A number of projects commenced in 2005 as part of the National Tourism Strategy and Plan. They include the establishment of a national museum, the establishment of interpretive centres at the Montserrat Volcano Observatory and the Montserrat National Trust, the beautification of communities, tourism signposting, a beach improvement feasibility study (Marina and Yachting Audit) and a tourism-awareness programme.[7]

28. The Montserrat Tourist Board is establishing a thematic national trail system and intends to develop six more hiking trails to provide opportunities for increased nature, heritage and community-based tourism and to provide opportunities for local economic activity. The Board's restyled destination website (www.visitmontserrat.com), unveiled in November 2005, is one of many tourism marketing and product-development initiatives.

E. Construction and infrastructure

29. According to official sources, the construction sector, mainly dominated by public sector construction, is one of the leading sectors of the Montserrat economy, contributing around 25 per cent to its GDP. In 2006, the Government is expected to continue to play a significant role in the sector.

30. The movement of population northward (see para. 5 above) has created a crisis in housing availability. As was reported in last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 36), the Government, in cooperation with DFID, has continued efforts to accommodate residents who were displaced by the volcano eruption. The Government is also aware of the need for a proper economic infrastructure in the north of the island, including the improvement of roads and utilities and seaport, airport and telecommunications licensing and development.

31. As reported in last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 38), in July 2004, following the preparation of a single programming document, which comprises the framework for development cooperation between the European Union and Montserrat and was submitted to the European Development Fund in December 2003 and approved in May 2004, Montserrat signed an agreement with the European Commission, giving it access to the ninth European Development Fund of 11 million euros (€)/EC$ 33 million. That sum was to be spread over five years for the purposes of sustainable tourism and the development of private-sector activity, and information and communication technologies (ICT).

32. The funds allocated under that aid programme assisted, inter alia, in the development of a town centre at Little Bay, with the associated development of port facilities. An important part of the development of Little Bay was the cultural centre completed in early 2006. It is Montserrat's first cultural centre since volcanic activities destroyed the centre in Plymouth.

33. In 2004, the Government of Montserrat disbursed approximately $10.4 million for an airport project, which contributed to an overall increase in economic activity on the island. The Government of Montserrat awarded a two-year contract to the St. Maarten-based Windward Islands Air Transport Services (Winair) to operate scheduled flights between Montserrat and Antigua using a 19-seater Twin Otter aircraft. The airport was inaugurated on 11 July 2005.[8]

V. Social conditions

A. General

34. According to the administering Power, the volcanic crisis has had a profound effect on traditional social structures and support systems, with many families and communities split up and relocated in different parts of the world. A large percentage of Montserratians are struggling to get by. The Government has had to develop and fund substantial social welfare and social development services, including for the high number of vulnerable elderly people who remain on the island. The services are carried out by the Community Services Department and the Social Welfare Office. The estimated expenditure for welfare and development services in 2005 was EC$ 3,329 million.

B. Education

35. The Montserrat education system is broadly based on the British system. According to information provided by the administering Power, both universal and secondary education have been achieved and the early childhood programme expanded. Provision is made for every child from the age of two to attend nursery school. There are two Government day-care facilities and three nursery schools. Of the four primary schools, two are privately owned. The Government-owned Montserrat secondary school is the only secondary school. Expenditure on education in 2005 was estimated at EC$ 5,613 million; the estimate for 2006 is EC$ 6,193 million.

36. Post-secondary education is now available in Montserrat, thanks to the completion of the Montserrat Community College, and a growing number of examination subjects are available to students. The University of the West Indies has a school of continuing studies in Montserrat, where students can study for a degree programme by distance learning.

37. In 2005, the Department of Education continued to implement the programmes outlined in the five-year education development plan for 2002 to 2007, which concentrates on building professional capacity and improving the educational achievement of all children. According to the administering Power, the performance of the education system is monitored by a set of core performance indicators designed and implemented by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Education Reform Unit. Montserrat has adapted the literacy and numeracy strategies of the United Kingdom aimed at strengthening teachers' skills to improve student achievement at the primary and lower secondary levels.

38. According to last year's working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 58), in March 2005, the Montserrat Youth Council elected a new board of executive members during its general election. The first section of the meeting consisted of a review of the national youth policy.

C. Health

39. Facilities in Montserrat include the 30-bed St. John's Hospital, which is able to cover all routine health issues, X-rays and minor operations, and primary care clinics at St. John's, St. Peter's, Cudjoe Head and Salem. Facilities are in place for emergency medical evacuation to Guadeloupe and Antigua. According to information provided by the administering Power, the expenditure on health care in Montserrat in 2005 was estimated at EC$ 10,915 million.

40. As of 1 January 2005, all public servants are covered by the social security scheme. A proposal from the public service unions regarding a more flexible pension scheme is awaited. Once that is concluded, the Government will take steps to introduce an appropriate national health-care insurance scheme to ensure that all citizens have access to health care.

41. According to information provided by the administering Power, there is a bilateral health-care agreement under which the United Kingdom accepts four patients a year for National Health Service medical treatment at the expense of the United Kingdom. The agreement only covers the provision of health care. Any other expenses, such as those incurred for travel, accommodation or subsistence, are the responsibility of the patient.

D. Human rights

42. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been extended to Montserrat by the administering Power. In its application to Montserrat, the Convention includes the right of an individual who alleges that his human rights have been transgressed and who has exhausted all other remedies to petition the European Court of Human Rights.

43. The United Kingdom has extended the following conventions to Montserrat: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture; the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Montserrat observes the regular reporting procedures under these instruments. A review is currently being conducted for the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, subject to applicable domestic legislation.

E. Crime

44. Since the volcanic eruptions in 1995, the Montserrat prison has been relocated eight times and prisoners have been relocated to the United Kingdom, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In November 2004, a new prison facility built with funds from the United Kingdom

and Montserrat was opened in Brades. All Montserratians sentenced in Montserrat are now able to serve their sentence on the island. According to information provided by the administering Power at the end of December 2005, the total prison population was 21.

45. In the context of the constitutional review process (see paras. 14-17 above), the 2003 report of the Constitutional Review Committee recommended the establishment of a police complaints board.

VI. United Kingdom development assistance

46. Considerable budgetary aid to Montserrat is still provided by the Department for International Development. The aid programme for 2006 is valued at EC$ 65 million, of which EC$ 48 million is a grant to cover the recurrent budget deficit. The DFID/Government of Montserrat Aid Framework will end in 2006. The Government of Montserrat believes that local revenues will not improve significantly without sustained growth in the economy, in particular in the private sector. It therefore believes that aid programmes should focus on maintaining essential services and supporting increasing levels of self-sufficiency and that the new tranche of aid should be negotiated taking into account the above-mentioned issues.

47. According to official sources, the recently appointed Head of the Overseas Territories Department at DFID, Phil Mason, visited Montserrat for the first time in February 2006.[9] He visited DFID-funded projects, met with a variety of Government officials and leaders of civil society and reported that he had seen very positive signs of recovery in Montserrat and that had been impressed with the vision of Little Bay, reiterating DFID support for what he described as a crucial platform for regeneration. Mr. Mason believed Montserrat was moving away from an emergency phase to one of long-term restoration.

VII. Relations with international organizations and entities

48. The 2003 report of the Constitutional Review Committee (see para. 14 above) recommended that Montserrat and the United Kingdom should develop some arrangement that would allow the Territory to trade in international markets without the approval of the United Kingdom. The dependent status of Montserrat should not impede its ability to engage in such trade, and provision to allow it to do so should be included in the new constitution.

49. The Territory continues to be a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, as well as of the institutions associated with both groups, including the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. Montserrat is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and its subsidiary bodies. The Territory is represented at the meetings of the Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development, sponsored by the World Bank.

50. As was reported in the 2005 working paper (A/AC.109/2005/16, para. 64), Montserrat intends to sign the treaty with the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), which will bring a closer integration between the 15 States

members of CARICOM. In January 2006, the first phase of CSME, the Caribbean single market, was launched. As of March 2006, Montserrat had not yet joined as the Government was still awaiting the legal approval from the British Government to sign on to CSME and the Caribbean Court of Justice in its original jurisdiction. Montserrat expects to benefit from the Caribbean Development Fund, designed to assist weaker economies in the region.

51. At the second meeting of the Fourth Committee on 5 October 2005, the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, speaking on behalf of CARICOM (see A/C.4/60/SR.2), said that 7 of the 16 listed Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Caribbean region. CARICOM continued to foster the integration of those Territories into the Caribbean Community and the Territories were members of several regional organizations. The elevation of those Territories from political dependency to full self-government was in the interest of the Caribbean region and the hemisphere.

VIII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

52. The position of the Government of Montserrat on constitutional reform is set out in paragraphs 14-17 above.

53. A representative of the Free Montserrat United Movement, Chedmond Browne, also participated in the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism held in Canouan, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from 17 to 19 May 2005 (see A/60/23, chap. II, annex, para. 36).

B. Position of the administering Power

54. In a statement at the 2nd meeting of the Fourth Committee held on 5 October 2005, during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly (see A/C.4/60/SR.2), the representative of the United Kingdom stated that the consultation process between his Government and its 10 overseas territories was continuing, and that the seventh annual meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council would be held in London in October 2005. The Council provided a forum for dialogue between democratically elected chief ministers and their equivalents from the Territories and United Kingdom Government Ministers on a range of issues, including the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas Territories, constitutional modernization, good governance, environmental matters and the United Kingdom's international obligations.

55. The United Kingdom Government welcomed the progress that was being made in the constitutional review process; there had been useful discussions between his Government and representatives of Gibraltar, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In Saint Helena, a consultative poll had rejected a revised draft constitution and that Territory was currently considering its next steps. Extensive discussions had been held with the Independence Commission set up in Bermuda to look into the implications of any move towards independence; at the Commission's request,

the Government of the United Kingdom had drafted a paper setting out its position on a number of issues, which was currently being studied by the Government of Bermuda.

56. The British Government continued to support capacity-building projects and to promote sustainable development and good governance in its overseas Territories. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme continued to support the implementation of the environment charters for the overseas Territories. The British Government likewise continued to support its overseas Territories in their efforts to strengthen relations with the European Commission and to improve access to the trade and economic and developmental aid provisions of the European Union — Overseas Countries and Territories Overseas Association Decision. It had also continued its informal cooperation with the Special Committee; in that context, a visit had been made to Bermuda with a view to consider progress towards that Territory's delisting.

57. In a separate communication regarding the Overseas Territories Consultative Council held in London in October 2005, the British representative noted that there had been useful discussions on the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories and progress on constitutional modernization, which continued to take account of the Territories' particular circumstances. Other areas covered were external relations, good governance, law enforcement, financial services, transport, sustainable development and relations with the European Union. The Department of International Development organized round tables in association with the Overseas Territories Consultative Council on human rights and disaster management.

IX. Consideration by the General Assembly

58. On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/117 B, section VII of which is devoted specifically to Montserrat.

Notes

[1] The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as from official sources of the Government of Anguilla and other published sources.

[2] http://www.caricom.org.

[3] Information submitted by the administering Power.

[4] *The New York Times*, 2 March 2005.

[5] http://www.mvo.ms.

[6] Autumn performance report 2005, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

[7] http://www.giu.gov.ms/Main_News.htm.

[8] See http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory?id=929882&business=true.

[9] Newsletter by the Governor's office at http://www.montserrat-newsletter.com/.